The Grandville Gooch

An Investigation Into the Origin of West Michigan's
Most Elusive Woodland Mystery

Leaping Lizard Investigations of West Michigan
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Introduction

Every town seems to have a story. Some revolve around haunted bridges, abandoned cemeteries, or mysterious lights dancing across forgotten fields. Others tell of strange animals glimpsed at dusk. Creatures that seem too large, too intelligent, or simply too unusual to fit neatly into the natural world. Grandville, Michigan, has one such legend. Locals know it simply as the Grandville Gooch.

Unlike many monster stories that emerged from internet folklore, tales of the Gooch supposedly began circulating long before social media connected every campfire tale into a worldwide phenomenon. According to local tradition, reports first gained attention during the early 1980s when residents living near the wooded floodplain surrounding the Grand River began describing encounters with an unusually large, upright creature. The stories were summarized in a handful of articles published by the now-defunct Grandville Gazette.

Over the last several months I spoke with residents, hunters, retired police officers, and lifelong outdoorsmen. Some laughed before telling their stories. Others grew noticeably quiet. Almost every witness admitted the same thing. "I've never told many people."

The Landscape

The first thing visitors notice about Grandville is how quickly neighborhoods give way to patches of river bottom forest. Cottonwoods lean over sluggish backwaters while dense thickets of autumn olive and willow create walls of vegetation that can hide a deer only twenty yards away. It's easy to imagine something avoiding detection here.

The river constantly changes the terrain. Seasonal flooding leaves behind isolated pockets of forest where fallen trees create tangled natural barriers. Coyotes thrive. White-tailed deer are plentiful. Great horned owls call through the darkness with unsettling precision. On a calm evening the woods seem ordinary. After midnight they become something entirely different.

Physical Description

By comparing witness statements, a surprisingly consistent profile begins to emerge.

- Height ranges from seven to eight feet.
- Estimated weight falls between 350 and 500 pounds.
- Hair coloration varies from dark brown to reddish-black depending on lighting conditions.
- Witnesses consistently describe unusually long arms, broad shoulders, and an effortless walking stride.
- Unlike the stereotypical roaring movie monster, the Gooch appears remarkably quiet.
- Most witnesses never heard vocalizations.
- Instead, they mention silence.
- An unsettling, almost deliberate silence

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Case File 1: Something Crossed the Cornfield

In October 1982, Harold Jenkins, a local farmer encountered the beast. Harold agreed to meet at his kitchen table after assuring me that he wasn't "one of those Bigfoot people." "I've hunted these woods since I was twelve," he began. "I know what bears look like. I know what deer look like. This wasn't either."

Harvest season had kept him working late. Around 10:30 p.m., he shut down his combine and started walking toward his pickup parked along a gravel access road. Movement caught his eye. At first he assumed it was another farmer. Then it stood. "It came up out of the corn like somebody unfolding."

Harold estimated the figure stood at least seven and a half feet tall. "It wasn't bulky like a football player. It was lean, but wide through the shoulders. Moonlight reflected from dark reddish-brown hair that covered most of the body except for the face. It looked right at me."

The encounter lasted perhaps ten seconds. Neither moved. Then the creature crossed the remaining rows with surprising speed before disappearing into the trees bordering the river. "I've replayed that night in my head for forty years," Harold said. "If someone told me I imagined it, I'd almost believe them...except I can still remember its eyes."

Case File 2: The Sheriff's Deputy

Former Ottawa County deputy Daniel Bowser didn't volunteer his story until our interview had nearly ended. "I figured you'd think I was nuts," Bowser revealed.

During the summer of 1985 he responded to reports of livestock being disturbed near the western edge of Grandville. Nothing had been stolen.

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Fences remained intact. Yet several horses had crowded into one corner of a pasture, refusing to move. As Bowser searched the tree line with a flashlight, he noticed two amber reflections roughly eight feet above the ground.

"I thought somebody was standing on a stump." The eyes blinked. Then the entire shape shifted sideways. "It walked behind a cottonwood without making a sound." Bowser estimated the creature weighed between four and five hundred pounds. "I didn't chase it." He laughed, "I carried a revolver, not a cannon."

Case File 3: Children Along the River

In August 1987, brothers Kevin and Brian Mercer were fishing from a muddy bank while waiting for their father to finish work.

They heard splashing upstream. Assuming another fisherman had arrived, they ignored it. Then rocks began landing in the water. Not thrown hard. Just tossed. One… then another… then another.

Kevin looked toward the opposite bank. Standing partially concealed behind brush was what he first assumed to be a man wearing a heavy coat. "It had hair hanging off its arms." Brian remembered something different, "It smiled."

Neither brother described an aggressive expression. Instead, they both recalled what appeared to be simple curiosity. When Kevin stood to get a better look, the figure turned, climbed the steep riverbank with astonishing ease, and vanished into thick vegetation.

Neither brother mentioned the encounter until years later. Their descriptions, given separately, matched almost perfectly

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Case File 4: The Jogger

On an October morning in 1996, elementary school teacher Lisa Morgan ran a familiar trail near the river before sunrise.

About halfway through her route she noticed every bird had stopped singing. "It was like somebody flipped a switch, " she recalled. Ahead stood a large shape beside a fallen maple. It wasn't hiding. It simply watched.

Lisa slowed to a walk. The creature tilted its head slightly, almost studying her. "I remember thinking how human its posture looked." Then it stepped behind the tree". She expected it to emerge on the other side."It never did," she stated.

When she cautiously approached moments later, nothing remained except several unusually deep impressions in damp soil leading toward the river. "I've seen moose in Canada," she later said. "This wasn't anything I've ever seen before."

Looking for Answers

As with every regional cryptid report, ordinary explanations deserve consideration.

- Poor lighting alters perception,
- and distance exaggerates size.
- Large deer standing briefly on their hind legs have startled more than one experienced hunter.
- Escaped livestock,
- misidentified people wearing hunting gear,
- and even the power of expectation can influence memory.

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Yet some reports resist easy dismissal. The consistency of the descriptions separated by years, locations, and witnesses who never met one another keeps the legend alive.

Whether the Grandville Gooch represents an unknown primate, an accumulation of mistaken observations, or simply one of Michigan's most enduring campfire stories remains impossible to prove. Perhaps that's exactly why people continue looking. Because mysteries rarely survive once they're solved. They survive because every now and then, just after sunset, someone glances toward the trees along the Grand River and catches the unmistakable feeling that something else is watching. Sometimes, according to those who know the legend best, it watches back.

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Leaping Lizard Investigations of West Michigan

History

The Leaping Lizard Investigators has been chasing the unexplained since 1984, when Scum Puppy and Bally first stepped into the shadows where reason ends and nightmares begin. Based in West Michigan, they have spent decades uncovering forgotten legends, eerie encounters, and mysteries that refuse to stay buried. From haunted cemeteries and cursed bridges to cryptids lurking in the woods, strange lights over Lake Michigan, and whispers of creatures that should not exist, no case is too bizarre. Their investigations have crossed abandoned buildings, dark forests, lonely backroads, and places where silence carries a warning.

When they aren't documenting the unknown, Scum Puppy and Bally create equally unsettling sounds as the founding members of The Semi-Flying, Headless, Screaming, Thrashing Chickens. Some mysteries can be explained. Others leave only footprints, echoes, and the uneasy feeling that something was watching all along.

Team Members

- Scum Puppy: lead investigator
- Bally: lead investigator

Anomalous Accolades

- Distinguished Field Investigator Award

  Presented in recognition of exceptional dedication and professionalism during field investigations.

- Excellence in Evidence Collection Award

  Honoring outstanding commitment to documenting and preserving investigative findings.

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Anomalous Accolades (continued)

- Advanced Environmental Monitoring Award
  Recognizing exceptional use of environmental data and investigative equipment in the field.
- Outstanding Anomalous Observation Award
  Awarded for documenting a particularly notable unexplained event or phenomenon.
- Meritorious Night Operations Citation
  Presented for exemplary service and perseverance during overnight investigations.
- Research & Documentation Achievement Award
  Recognizing significant contributions to case research, historical records, and investigative reporting.
- Applied Cryptozoological Field Studies Award
  Honoring excellence in the pursuit and documentation of cryptic related investigations.
- Exceptional Contributions to Paranormal Investigation Award
  Presented in recognition of sustained dedication to advancing paranormal field research.

Documentation

- Electronic copies of L.L.I. case files, reports, and field notes can be found on the world wide web and the darknet. They are maintained by researchers, investigators, and collectors.
- Original hardcopies have been distributed among academic institutions, research organizations, and private collectors. Traveling exhibitions can be viewed at museums and cryptozoology / paranormal repositories.

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Abridged list of topics investigated

- 1984 West Ottawa Middle School Case of the Missing $10 Bill (Holland, Michigan)
- 1984 Blue Oysta Bah Prank Call Barrage (Holland, Michigan)
- 1984 Seminole Drive Spontaneous Garage Combustion (Holland, Michigan)
- 1984 Dynatone Starburst Fretting Conundrum (Holland, Michigan)
- 1984 Anchorage Marina Sauna Rocks Urinal Mystery (Holland, Michigan)
- Waukazoo Woods Bat People (Holland, Michigan)
- Howler of Hell (Holland, Michigan)
- Fallen Leaf Lane Night Ninjas (Holland, Michigan)
- Don Vebsman / Channel Zero Pirate Television Transmissions (Holland, Michigan)
- 1985 Anchorage Marina Swimming Pool (Baby Ruth?) Deposits (Holland, Michigan)
- 1985 Meijer Grocery Cold Storage Debacle (Holland, Michigan)
- 1986 West Ottawa High School Student Locker (Dog?) Poop Deposits (Holland, Michigan)
- Hazelbank (Holland, Michigan)
- Exalted Order of Goats (Holland, Michigan)
- House of David (Benton Harbor, Michigan)
- Crystal Springs Cemetery Anomalous Events (Benton Harbor, Michigan)
- Vriesland Cemetery Glowing Grave (Zeeland, Michigan)
- Winegar Cemetery Glowing Grave (Byron Center, Michigan)
- Lakeshore Bleeding Walls (West Olive, Michigan)
- Mrs. Lopez and the Closet Man (Dallas. Texas)
- Septic Man (Dallas, Texas)
- Marionette Massacre (Dallas. Texas)
- 1992 Spencer Kasten Westone Dynasty Fiasco (West Olive, Michigan)
- Elks Lodge #1315 Hauntings (Holland, Michigan)
- 1994 UFO Event Over Holland, Michigan
- West Michigan Meat Scones Mystery (Holland, Michigan)
- Grandville Cemetery Skunk Ghost (Grandville, Michigan)

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Leaping Lizard Investigations of West Michigan

Abridged list of topics investigated (continued)

- Ada Witch (Ada, Michigan)
- Findley Cemetery Haunting (Ada, Michigan)
- Hell's Bridge (Algoma Township / Rockford, Michigan)
- Michigan Melon Heads (Laketown Township, Michigan)
- Felt Mansion Hauntings (Laketown Township, Michigan)
- Lake Macatawa Swamp Man (Holland, Michigan)
- The Lake Michigan Triangle
- Saugatuck Spook Lights (Saugatuck, Michigan)
- Douglas Not Deer (Douglas, Michigan)
- Dewey Lake Monster (Dowagiac, Michigan)
- The Wealthy Ghost (Grand Rapids, Michigan)
- Saugatuck Dunes State Park Albino Sand Snake Sightings (Holland, Michigan)
- West Michigan Dogman
- 2026 Hoobie Records / Discogs Shadow Ban
- Grandville Gooch (Grandville, Michigan)

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